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# THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY

Entered as second-class matter November 18, 1907, at the Post Office, New York, N. Y., under the Act of Congress of March 1, 1879

VOL. III

NEW YORK, APRIL 16, 1910

No. 23

The English Board of Education has recently issued a special report on The Teaching of Classics in Secondary Schools in Germany which is of the greatest interest to all classical teachers in this country. Three distinguished English scholars, Messrs. J. W. Headlam, Frank Fletcher, and J. L. Paton, were appointed as a committee to visit schools in Germany and make this report. It is 172 pages in length and may be gotten for a shilling from Wyman and Sons, London.

The report is divided into three sections: (1) The Origin and History of the Reform in Classical Teaching in Germany, (2) Comparison of English and German Classical Schools, (3) The Method of Teaching Classics in the Reform Schools in Germany. A good deal of the history of this movement is available elsewhere, as is also the comparison between English and German schools, but such a detailed treatment of the German method of teaching Classics I am not aware of. It would be too great a task to discuss the report in detail; on every page it is full of suggestions for our own work. There are two or three quotations, however, which I should like to make.

To the question, what form does the oral work take, the following answer is given, applying to the beginning year:

(1) In the translation, as soon as a chapter is finished, one of the boys is called upon to read the whole chapter through in Latin, any mistake in quantity or pronunciation being at once put right by some member of the class. Great stress is laid on intelligent reading, the proper pauses must be preserved, and the emphatic words duly emphasized. When at the next lesson the translation is revised, all books are closed and the teacher reads the Latin sentence by sentence, calling on members of the class to translate. The effect of this practice on the attention of the class is most marked: it forces them to pick up Latin by the ear and certainly counteracts all tendency to word for word translation by forcing the boy to think rather in terms of the sentence than the isolated word.

(2) After each section has been gone through carefully, all books are turned over and the teacher puts questions based on the text to the class. Each answer must be a complete sentence in itself, and the word which answers the question must come first in the answer. This exercise trains to careful observation in the reading of the text and plasticity of expression. In the first lessons, this reproduction of question and answer will perhaps be used after each sentence in the reader; the question words used—*quis? quid? cur? quando? quot?*—are written on

the blackboard and are easily picked up. This is, of course, practically an exercise in retroversion, and might easily develop into a mere parrot repetition if the teacher did not vary his questions skillfully. As soon as facility is acquired, a longer section, say a whole story, is taken, and the following may serve as a sample:—*Cum adolescentulus Romanus in castris amicis clipeum pulchrum et splendidum monstraret, Marius: "Cur laudas", inquit, "clipeum tuum? Strenuorum Romanorum fiducia non in sinistra sed in dextra est."*

During the first year the teacher will be content if the pupil in his answer simply rings the changes on the words used by the teacher in his questions: later on he expects the boy to cast his answer in quite a different mould and show some power of self-expression. The boys, too, become keen at showing how well they can do it. In the top classes, at the beginning of a translation lesson one or two of the pupils are called upon to give a short résumé or précis of the previous lesson in Latin, and this will be followed by a few questions in Latin by the teacher, intended to supplement the narrative or to bring out some point that is not clear. The boys in the top classes gave these résumés without any fumbling in quite passable Latin; any mistake was at once corrected by the vigilant class-mates. The whole showed a sense of mastery, and the joy that mastery gives *possunt quia posse videntur*. But such results would not be possible unless in the lower classes boys had been habituated to pick up Latin by the ear and express themselves in Latin simply and shortly. Similarly boys in the third year were called to read a piece of *oratio obliqua* into direct speech.

(3) Other exercises are in connection with vocabulary. Boys will be instructed to go through their back reading and put together all the words they find connected with the fleet, the army, the town, its buildings, its inhabitants, its government, etc., and the teacher will conduct a small dialogue on this vocabulary. *Quid in oppido videtis? Templā, vias, aedificia, portam, monumenta, fluvium, pontes videmus.* The appropriate adjectives are elicited. *Quis in oppido habitat? Homines, viri, feminae, pueri, liberi in oppido habitant.* This oral composition is not meant to prevent or prescribe written composition; on the contrary, it paves the way for it by inducing a sort of grammatical conscience which recognizes the fault at once by an instinct bred of habit, and in this way written composition is saved from preventable blunders. The whole of the composition is done orally during the first few weeks of learning Latin; it is based on the reader, a sentence with the singular is turned into the plural or *vice versa*, the tense, or person or voice is altered, adjectives are inserted and so on. Not until the way has been thus carefully prepared does the teacher ask for a written composition. He knows how much of a small boy's attention is absorbed by the very process of writing, the average boy of twelve cannot write and think at the same time, and therefore it is wiser to prevent

the occurrence of mistakes than after their occurrence to try to eradicate them. The advice of Quintilian is followed out: *scribendo dicimus diligentius, dicendo scribimus facilius*.

In the next issue I shall make another quotation with some criticism.

G. L.

### PROBLEMS OF ELEMENTARY GREEK

The first problem is the struggle for existence. In the opinion of the Philistines, there is no reason for any Greek problem whatever. Why should this antiquated mummy of a dead and buried past any longer linger superfluous on the stage? Of course people who talk that way do not know, but inasmuch as they are numerous and influential and aggressive, and are themselves convinced that they do know, they count for much in our day and must be reckoned with.

Greek yet remains the very best means we have for plowing up and wrinkling the human brain and developing its gray matter, and wrinkles and gray matter are still the most valuable assets a student can get down on the credit side of his ledger. It is a commonplace with the psychologist that the accurate translation of Greek requires a larger number of distinct mental acts and adjustments than the translation of any other language ordinarily studied, and a definite understanding of the facts makes this plain to the layman as well. The problem is to get these facts clearly before the layman's mind. Our modern educational reformers have in such cock-sure fashion laid down the principle that the Classics, and above all Greek, are out of date, useless lumber, unfit as a mental furnishing for the scholar and the practical man of to-day, that to most people the real issue has been befogged and obscured, and yet, in solving the problem of the relative values of humanistic and utilitarian studies, there is need for the clearest thinking and the clearest statement of principles. Not all should study Greek. As there are diversities of gifts, so there are diversities of operation; but there should be the self-same spirit working in all, the desire for the best individual results, and surely the brain-developing and culture value of the greatest of the languages cannot be safely ignored in any scheme of education.

The displacing of the old curriculum has given opportunity for the law of 'natural selection' to operate. The difficulty is that the apostles of change, in their eagerness to enthrone their own specialties, have denied that the old curriculum has any practical value. It is well enough to know Greek, of course, for those who have time and taste for it, but it is a luxury, an ornament and plaything for the dilettante, but useless for the hard-headed, common-sense man who must solve the problems and meet the competitions of our complex modern life. But the

life is more than meat and the body than raiment, and the things that are not seen and eternal are of more value to us as immortal souls, in the long run, than the things that are seen but temporal.

In the first place, then, the Greek teacher must be a missionary, even though he may seem to be merely a voice crying in the wilderness. He must know why his subject is worth while, and how to impress its value upon the minds of pupils who look to him for guidance. The trouble now usually is that the teacher of Greek cannot bring his argument to bear upon the student until the question has been practically settled against Greek. If a student does not find out till he enters college the great advantage of a knowledge of Greek, especially if he has literary tastes and wishes to specialize in English or Latin, it is a hardship to be compelled to give up nearly a quarter of his time in college to the study of Greek, whereas, if he had studied Greek two or three years before entering college, it would have been a help to him from the very start of his college course.

It is coming to be true more and more that the teachers in our High Schools are men and women without classical training, or at least without a knowledge of Greek. Too often impressed with the idea that change is necessarily progress, they ignore the teachings and experiences of the past, and hence deprive their pupils of the only means which can adequately explain the present. Without a first-hand knowledge of what the Greeks stand for in the development of present civilization along artistic, aesthetic, philosophic and literary lines, one can never adequately understand or explain how our present ideals and conditions came to be what they are, nor can one form a fair and comprehensive judgment as to present problems and tendencies. He who will not be a Greek must be to some extent a barbarian.

The only adequate knowledge of what Greek civilization means is first-hand knowledge, and this can be obtained only by an acquaintance with the Greek language, which is in itself quite the most marvellous thing the Greeks have left to us. This question is not a problem in elementary Greek, but it is an elementary problem for the Greek teacher to face, and he must in the end contribute to the right solution. For the matter is not yet settled, and ultimately the fittest will survive, for so it is written in the law.

I suppose it is out of the question to expect that many even of the large High Schools in the middle west will offer Greek, at least under present conditions, but it is only fair that principals and teachers in our High Schools should call the attention of pupils to its value, and encourage them to take it, if not in High School at least in college. As Professor Bristol has recently said: